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Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/143. It is based largely on the discussions held by the Commission for Social Development, the intergovernmental body responsible for the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, at its fifty-third session, the priority theme of which was "Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world". The present report highlights progress made so far, as well as the challenges encountered, in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, focusing on its three main objectives, namely, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of employment and decent work for all, and social integration. It also addresses the special needs of Africa and the least developed countries and progress made in the implementation of programmes related to social groups, and examines some specific areas in which social development can contribute to achieve socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for the consideration by the Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/143, the General Assembly reaffirmed that the Commission for Social Development served as the main United Nations forum for an intensified global dialogue on social development issues, and called upon Member States, the relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and civil society to enhance their support for its work. Acknowledging the inclusion of the goals to end poverty and to incorporate full and productive employment and decent work for all in the sustainable development goals,[1] the Assembly reiterated the continued importance of giving due consideration to poverty eradication, social integration, full employment and decent work for all in the ongoing discussion on the post-2015 development agenda. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventieth session on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

2. The present report is based largely on the discussions of the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-third session, held in February 2015. The priority theme of the Commission's 2015-2016 review and policy cycle is "Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world". In reviewing the implementation of the programme in relation to social groups, the report also includes the situation of indigenous peoples as well as other developments outside the Commission that are relevant to various social groups. It also summarizes the Commission's deliberations on the contributions of social development in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals, integrating its social, economic and environmental dimensions, and forward-looking strategies to strengthen the social dimensions of sustainable development.

3. The report provides an assessment of progress made in advancing social development, focusing on its three main objectives, namely, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of employment and decent work for all, and social integration. It also addresses the special needs of Africa and the least developed countries, as well as reviews progress made in the implementation of programmes related to social groups, highlighting the situations of young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, families, and indigenous peoples. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

[1] Contained in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970 and Corr.1) submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, which decided that the proposal of the Open Working Group should be the basis for the integration of the sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing fully that other inputs might also be considered in this intergovernmental negotiation process by the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

II. Implementing the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development: the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-third session and beyond

A. Priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world

4. The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, provided the first opportunity for the world community to focus its attention at the highest political level on the nature and roots of social problems and trends. At the Summit, Member States adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action, which remains to date the most comprehensive action plan for the achievement of social development. Building on earlier commitments, it sets out a vision and a set of norms and explicit commitments to guide actions to achieve social development at the national, regional and international levels.

5. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action represents a unique consensus on three key objectives of social development, namely, eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and fostering social integration, and sets out a holistic approach to achieve them. Recognizing that social development cannot be achieved by the social sectors alone, nor through piecemeal initiatives, the approach requires an orientation of values, objectives and priorities towards advancing social progress and a better quality of life and well-being of all. It aspires to "place people at the centre of development by ensuring full participation by all, and direct ... economies to meet human needs more effectively."

6. During the fifty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, Member States acknowledged that progress towards fulfilling the Copenhagen commitments has been uneven, and that the vision and three major objectives adopted at the Summit remain acutely relevant today. In the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals, it is high time to rethink and strengthen social development to ensure that the holistic, integrated, transformative and people-centred approach adopted at the Summit are fully integrated into the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, building on lessons learned from the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development.

1. Progress in poverty eradication

7. Since the Summit, Member States have been making steady progress towards eradicating poverty, one of the three major objectives of social development. The target set out in the Millennium Development Goals, to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than $1.25 a day, had been met at the global level by 2010. However, despite the enormous progress, the level of poverty continues to be high. Of particular concern is the fact that more than 1 billion people are still living below the poverty line, and that in 2011, 2.2 billion people lived just above poverty line (on less than $2 a day), which is a slight decline from 2.59 billion in 1981.[2] Progress has also

[2] See www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview (accessed 19 June 2015).

been uneven across regions.[3] In addition, economic recovery from the recent global economic and financial crisis has been weak in many countries, which adversely affected national efforts to reduce poverty and social exclusion. In countries that adopted austerity measures (including developed countries), especially cuts in social services, the levels of poverty and vulnerability have increased, leading to high social tensions owing to public discontent. It is now widely recognized that the reduction of poverty is a universal agenda, which all countries, not only developing countries, need to address.

8. In the past 20 years, the multidimensionality of poverty as well as the need to address its root/structural causes have been increasingly recognized, leading to more integrated national poverty reduction strategies. Economic growth, while necessary, is not sufficient to reduce poverty. Growth, if it does not benefit all people, further exacerbates inequality and creates social tensions.

9. It is now understood that poverty afflicts different people at different times in the life cycle. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable to poverty, including, among others, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, migrants, and ethnic minorities. For example, indigenous peoples, in particular, although they represent only 5 per cent of the global population, make up approximately 15 per cent of the world's poor. This is caused by various factors, including physical and political marginalization, discrimination, loss of traditional livelihoods, poor access to quality education and health care, loss of territories and the denigration of their cultures and languages.

10. While universal programmes, in general, have been proven to be effective in addressing poverty and are intended to reach all people, the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and communities still face barriers (both physical and cultural), and thus, may remain excluded. Complimentary measures are needed to enable those populations to benefit from universal programmes. In addition, people fall into poverty owing to multiple causes, such as loss of jobs, sickness, disability, the global economic crisis, the high rate and volatility of prices for food and energy, conflict, natural disasters, and epidemics, including HIV/AIDS. In order to address specific causes, differentiated or targeted interventions are also necessary.

11. In addition, in view of the sheer magnitude of the global growth of the ageing population, failure to acknowledge the implications of population ageing will undermine the success of efforts to eradicate poverty.

12. The negative impacts of climate change and natural disasters have already been eroding the achievements in poverty reduction in many countries, as those who have escaped poverty are now slipping back into it as a result of such factors. The constructive outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015, is critical not only to combat climate change, but also to reduce poverty. Similarly, the linkage between poverty and natural disasters or man-made shocks needs to be further analysed and addressed.

13. People living in poverty or those who are vulnerable to poverty lack assets that are necessary to recover from economic and environmental shocks. In the absence of

[3] The significant reduction occurred in China and the East Asia and Pacific region (939 million in 1990 to 161 million in 2011), while the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia lag behind.

adequate social protection, they are more likely to fall into or to become trapped in poverty when such shocks do occur. Poverty eradication strategies need to incorporate measures to address the particular vulnerabilities they face and to enhance their resilience, thus assisting them in moving from or staying out of poverty.

14. Poverty and inequality are closely interlinked. In order to tackle widening inequality and the high incidence of poverty, some countries are pursuing inclusive and sustained growth strategies by enhancing productive capacity in the agricultural sector. Others have implemented new poverty reduction strategies that include an employment component focused on vulnerable groups, and the provision of tertiary education for all children, which is aimed at breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

15. Social spending, as an investment to build capabilities at the individual and community levels, is an important factor that contributes to the effectiveness of poverty eradication strategies. Ensuring improved access to basic health care, quality education, clean water and sanitation, nutritious food, land, social protection and decent work will help people move and stay out of poverty. At the same time, such investment builds capable and productive human resources that are key to inclusive and sustained economic growth. In this regard, some countries have increased the allocation of public resources to social sectors in order to reduce poverty and inequality, while others have allocated revenues derived from natural resources to implement social programmes that target the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

2. Employment and decent work for all

16. At the World Summit for Social Development, the creation of employment, the reduction of unemployment and the promotion of appropriately and adequately remunerated employment were identified as three major objectives of social development. Member States made a commitment to promote employment and decent work not only as goals, but also as a means to combat poverty and to promote social integration. Adequately remunerated jobs provide income security and afford opportunities for access to social protection and dignity, and provide a channel through which individuals can relate and contribute to the wider society, therefore providing a pathway to moving out of poverty and social exclusion.

17. Twenty years later, the goal of full employment and decent work for all continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing all countries, with more than 202 million people unemployed worldwide in 2013, an increase from 157 million people in 1995.[4] This is mainly because employment growth has not been sufficient to absorb the growing labour force. Globally, 672 million jobs are needed to provide employment opportunities for the 202 million people who are jobless, and an additional 470 million jobs will be needed for new entrants into the workforce between 2016 and 2030.[5]

18. Young people are disproportionately affected. Unemployment rates for youth are two to three times higher than the average rates for the general population. Even

[4] International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. Available from www.ilo.org/empelm/what/WCMS_114240/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 29 September 2014).

[5] International Labour Organization, The global jobs crisis: facts and figures. Available from: https://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/392784 (accessed 19 June 2015).

more worrisome is the fact that in some countries a large number of youth are neither in employment nor in education or training.

19. In relation to unemployment, the share of wages in total gross domestic product (GDP) declined in a majority of countries, both developed and developing, from 2000 to 2008.[6] While labour productivity has increased, the real average wage in the developed countries comprising the Group of 20 has declined between 2006 and 2013. The wage disparities between top and bottom earners have also increased in most countries, owing largely to technological advances, globalization, declines in real minimum wages and other changes in labour market policies and institutions.[7] This pattern of growth in joblessness has made it difficult to achieve further progress in reducing poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Without the provision of opportunities to all segments of society to earn decent income, social cohesion, in some parts of the world, has been eroding or is severely challenged.

20. Furthermore, not all employment provides income security. The majority of people in developing countries work in vulnerable jobs, often in the informal sector, with low wages under poor working conditions and without social protection. Informal or precarious jobs are often the only options available to sustain their livelihoods. It is estimated that three quarters of workers are employed on temporary or short-term contracts, in informal jobs often without any contract, under own-account arrangements or in unpaid family jobs.[8] Even among workers who earn wages and salaries, less than half (42 per cent) are working on a permanent contract. A new trend points to the rise in part-time employment. In the majority of countries with available information, part-time jobs outpaced gains in full-time employment between 2009 and 2013.[9] Women, young people and other disadvantaged groups are overrepresented in both vulnerable employment and the informal sector.

21. Promoting employment and decent work is key to achieving meaningful progress towards inclusive and sustainable development. In countries where labour market policies and institutions have helped to increase real wages, especially for less-skilled workers, there has been a positive change in economic growth and employment. For example, in an effort to improve access to jobs that provide living wages, the Group of 20 has prioritized employment creation, including efforts to bring more women into the labour market. This also helps reduce the burden of social protection systems and enhances productivity.

22. To better prepare workers, it is important to align educational systems with labour markets, as well as to strengthen vocational training that addresses the current and future demands of the labour market, as well as to promote lifelong learning and non-formal education. Flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work and flexible hours, will also help workers, especially females, in balancing work and family life.

23. Specific challenges that are being faced by disadvantaged social groups should be also addressed, for example by shifting the focus of attention away from the negative perception of the financial burden those policies bring towards recognition

[6] International Labour Organization, *World of Work Report 2014: Developing with Jobs* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2014).

[7] E/CN.5/2015/3.

[8] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2015: The Changing Nature of Jobs* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2015).

[9] Ibid.

of the positive contributions they bring to economic development and social progress. The establishment of quotas for the hiring of persons with disabilities has been proven effective. To promote youth employment, innovative strategies that have proved effective include paid internships, youth guarantees, dual education, skills training, vocational education, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship promotion and incentives for businesses that hire young people.

24. Other good practices include the promotion of small- and medium-sized enterprises, the provision of support to sectors which create decent jobs that contribute to environmental protection, rural employment guarantee schemes and conditional and unconditional assistance programmes that promote the formation of human capital. In the European Union, the Europe 2020 growth strategy placed social policies at the core of the Union's economic strategy, setting targets for raising employment rates and lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty. Similarly, in developing countries, there are growing calls for social and economic policies that prioritize the creation of jobs.

25. Finally, the mainstreaming of employment and decent work into the sustainable development agenda is a must. Combatting climate change and environmental degradation poses significant challenges to employment, while the transition to sustainable development paths is bringing job opportunities in new sectors. Social policies can protect and invest in those who will be negatively affected by the transition to green economy. For example, coherent socioeconomic and environmental policies need to be formulated to promote green jobs in the labour-intensive sectors on which disadvantaged social groups and communities depend for their livelihoods.

3. Social integration

26. At the World Summit for Social Development, the importance of social integration to create a society for all, where no one is left behind, was recognized. Social integration or inclusion is critical to the achievement of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all, and thus the advancement of social progress for all. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action defined social integration, rooted in social justice and respect for diversity, both as an objective and a process to realize a pluralistic inclusive society where all persons, regardless of their backgrounds, have rights and responsibilities and actively participate in social, economic, cultural and political life to achieve their full potential in life.

27. In implementing social integration policies, countries have developed a wide variety of strategies towards the achievement of social integration within their national context. Some have focused exclusively on policies targeting certain disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups, such as women, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and people living in poverty; others have focused on broader inclusive policies, such as reducing inequality and removing barriers to participation, improving access to social services and productive assets, combatting social exclusion, stereotyping or discrimination, and enhancing social cohesion by managing social tensions or potential conflicts.

28. Many countries have been making efforts to respect diversity and promote social inclusion to achieve inclusive development. Some countries are implementing national programmes that enhance the participation of women, children, girls, persons with disabilities, older persons and ethnic minorities; some have increased

public spending on new plan of action for tackling social exclusion; while others are focusing on combatting social inclusion through local governance structures, including through a quota system to improve the participation of disadvantaged groups at the local level. Some countries have launched policies that target a number of social groups, including older persons, and seek to promote the overall well-being of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion through a multidimensional approach that involves income and social benefits, employment, education, health and environment, social services and culture. Proactive measures to combat discrimination aimed at improving the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are being actively pursued in some countries. In this regard, efforts should be also made to involve vulnerable groups, communities and individuals in the formulation and implementation of an inclusive sustainable development agenda at the national and local levels.

29. One of the major challenges to social cohesion is widening inequality, both income and non-income, and within and among countries, which has heightened social tensions and even unrest, and which undermines development efforts and unravels progress made thus far. Many countries have been addressing inequalities and disparities across groups and regions through inclusive policy measures that focus on inclusive and equitable growth, poverty reduction and social protection interventions. For example, some countries have redistributed revenues from commodities such as oil and gas to less developed regions in order to tackle inequality. Some regions, such as Latin America, have successfully curbed inequalities through effective social protection programmes that guarantee minimum income and improve access to and quality of education, including secondary and tertiary levels, develop more supportive labour market policies, increase social expenditure beyond education, increase wages and enact progressive taxation, coupled with redistribution, and the adoption of democratic political processes.

30. Gender-based inequality is a major barrier to social integration. Measures should be taken in such areas as: enhancement of the participation of women in all aspects of life activities, including in labour unions and cooperatives; enactment of laws that set out a minimum wage for all people; and the provision of opportunities to empower women, including their increased participation in the labour market.

31. There is growing consensus on the potential role of social protection for inclusive and equitable development, thus promoting social integration/inclusion. While large majorities of people in developing countries are still living without any social protection, a positive trend is that an increased number of countries are adopting social protection measures to address poverty and inequality, as well as to enhance resilience to shocks. Those social protection measures include universal social protection floors as well as social safety nets that target the most vulnerable groups, including people living in poverty, older persons, families with children, youth, and persons with disabilities. In some regions, universal access to social protection is considered as a human right. For example, by making social polices the core of the economic strategy of the European Union for the first time, the Europe 2020 strategy[10] aims to modernize social protection systems, including pension systems.

[10] Available from http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm (accessed 20 July 2015).

B. The special needs of Africa and the least developed countries

1. Africa: economic growth, progress and challenges in social development

32. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union Social Policy Framework for Africa have been fundamental in guiding national and regional development efforts, in particular efforts aimed at reducing extreme poverty and hunger. Furthermore, the African Union Commission's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*[11] and the African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda[12] present opportunities for an even more robust development agenda for the region. Africa has continued to exhibit solid social and economic gains since the adoption of NEPAD. Poverty levels are declining, and access to and quality of public services, education, health and gender outcomes are improving.

33. The economic growth in the region accelerated after the decline in 2012 and is expected to reach 4.0 per cent in 2015 and to 4.8 per cent in 2016.[13] Falling commodity prices, declining exchange rates and geopolitical instability in central and northern Africa have contributed to the lower forecasts compared with to the pre-crisis years. This relatively high growth, however, has not created decent and productive jobs at a pace that is commensurate with the growth in population. Consequently, levels of poverty and structural unemployment remain high. Effects of the global financial and economic crises, instability of prices of food and energy, epidemics, such as the Ebola virus, geopolitical instability in some countries, environmental disasters and issues of governance have worsened inequalities, vulnerabilities and exclusion in the region.

34. Recent estimates of the World Bank show that in 2011 about 39.6 per cent of Africa's population lived on less than $1.25 a day as compared with 46.6 per cent in 1990.[14] The region, however, will not be able to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 despite collective efforts. In order to significantly reduce poverty levels, African countries must sustain high economic growth accompanied by structural transformation.

35. While the number of undernourished people throughout the world has declined, it has increased in Africa from 219 million in 2010-2012 to 233 million in 2014-2016.[15] There is a continued long-term underinvestment in the agricultural sector, whereas the food import bill has been increasing significantly.[16] This undermines the

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[11] Available from http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/01_Agenda2063_popular_version_ENG%20FINAL%20April%202015.pdf.

[12] Available from www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Dakar/pdf/African CommonPositionFINAL.pdf.

[13] United Nations, "*World Economic Situation and Prospects 2015*: Update as of mid-2015" (New York, 2015). Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_archive/2015wesp_myu_en.pdf.

[14] See World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2014/2015: Ending Poverty and Sharing Prosperity* (Washington, D.C., 2014).

[15] See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World: meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress* (Rome, 2015).

[16] Available from www.fao.org/about/who-we-are/director-gen/faodg-statements/detail/en/c/237214/.

region's effort to feed itself, eradicate extreme poverty and become a major exporter of agricultural commodities to the rest of the world.

36. Efforts to reduce poverty and hunger in the near future could be affected by natural calamities, such as the effects of climate change. A large majority of Africa's population relies heavily on climate-sensitive sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism for their livelihoods.

37. Prospects for sustained job growth in Africa remain weak despite the strong economic performance of the continent over the past decade. The share of vulnerable employment in total employment is very high, and many countries continue to experience declines in the labour income share, which is exacerbating wage and income inequality within countries. African leaders have reached a shared conviction that industrialization is one of the most viable paths to employment-generating growth and development and is a core prerequisite for the structural transformation of its economy. This was reaffirmed by the participants of the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), that was held in Harare in April 2015. The summit approved the SADC industrialisation strategy and road map, which operationalizes the "SADC Strategy for Economic Transformation: Leveraging the Region's Diverse Resources for Sustainable, Economic and Social Development through Beneficiation and Value Addition".

38. There has also been progress across the region in increasing the enrolment of children in school. However, gender disparities persist in school completion, learning outcomes and secondary and tertiary education in many countries. North Africa has almost achieved universal primary education, with a net enrolment rate of 99 per cent in 2012. In sub-Saharan Africa, net enrolment rates increased from 2 per cent in 1990 to 78 per cent in 2012. The number of children enrolled in primary school more than doubled between 1990 and 2012. Nevertheless, only three out of five pupils complete primary school. About 33 million children of primary school age, of whom 56 per cent were girls, were not in school in 2012, and significant proportions of those children come from disadvantaged backgrounds, have disabilities or live in conflict- affected countries.

39. In terms of health indicators, there have been substantial improvements in the rates of child immunization and survival, and in the number of people who receive antiretroviral therapies. The numbers of deaths related to malaria and HIV/AIDS, the rates of maternal and child mortality, and the number of people newly infected with HIV, have declined in the past decade. In sub-Saharan Africa, maternal mortality declined at an annual rate of 3.6 per cent between 2005 and 2013. Nonetheless, sub-Saharan Africa still has the highest maternal mortality ratio in the world.[17] At that pace, the continent falls far short of the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015.

40. Progress in reducing the disease burden in Africa remains slow and fragile owing to inadequate health-care systems and a shortage of health technologies and interventions that target diseases that affect predominantly poor and disadvantaged populations. The region is therefore prone to major shocks from neglected tropical diseases, such as the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In addition to exerting a heavy human toll and fomenting the

[17] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (New York, 2014).

stigmatization and social exclusion of affected individuals and communities, the Ebola outbreak is having a major impact on social and economic progress in the affected countries.[18]

2. Special needs of the least developed countries

41. The least developed countries, of which the large majority are in sub-Saharan Africa, face particular challenges in achieving social development objectives. Foremost, economic growth in those countries needs to be fast enough to create decent jobs and to reduce existing high levels of poverty. However, the rates of growth of the economies of the least developed countries as a whole is expected to further decelerate to 4.9 per cent in 2015 from 5.2 per cent in 2014 and 5.9 per cent in 2013.[19] The economies of ten countries in the group grew at rates close to or higher than 7 per cent in 2014 compared with 13 in 2013. The slowest rate of growth was recorded in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the countries most affected by the Ebola outbreak.

42. The risks and uncertainties associated with the economic outlook and the persistent pattern of relatively weak and volatile economic growth are symptomatic of the limits to the production structures of the least developed countries and their extreme structural vulnerability to shocks, which have great impact on the human and social development in these countries. Lessons from success stories of a few of those countries and from emerging countries suggest that those challenges can be effectively addressed through productive capacity-building and structural transformation.

43. The prevalence of undernourishment in the least developed countries is expected to decrease from 27.7 per cent in 2010-2012 to 26.7 per cent in 2014-2016.[15] Addressing food and nutrition security involves the enhancement of governance for food security and improvement of labour productivity through the use of adequate technologies and farm management practices and addressing issues related to access of small farmers and women to land, credit and extension services. The complex nature of the problems requires a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach that targets agricultural production and productivity, rural development, resilience-building, education and health, public works, trade and market access.

44. Even though progress in completion rates of primary schooling was slow, net primary enrolment in the least developed countries increased from 78 per cent in 2010 to 81 per cent in the period 2011-2012.[20] Gender parity at that level of education was achieved in some countries. The rate of enrolment in secondary education was still low and increased moderately at 43 per cent. The limited qualifications of teachers and the inadequacy of classroom equipment hindered further progress in this sector.

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[18] FAO, "Grave food security concerns following the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea", Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture, Special Alert, No. 333 (2 September 2014).

[19] See *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2015* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.II.C.2), available from www.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/.

[20] See Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, *State of the Least Developed Countries 2014: Follow-up of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries* (2014). Available from http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2014/10/State-of-the-Least-Developed-Countries-Report-2014.pdf.

45. Progress was made in reducing child mortality rates in most of the least developed countries, although not at a rate sufficient to achieve the Millennium Development Goal target of a two thirds reduction from the level of 1990. On average, the mortality rate of children below five years of age was high, at 81 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013. Most of those countries are not expected to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of a three-quarter reduction in the maternal mortality rate from the level of 1990. The prevalence of persons with HIV as a percentage of the population aged 15 to 49 in this group of countries declined marginally, from 2 per cent in 2010 to 1.9 per cent in 2013.

46. Many of the least developed countries deploy formal safety nets that include schemes that focus on continued access to basic services, reduce income and consumption poverty and promote household investments in human capital to decrease intergenerational poverty, while some use income generation schemes for social protection. Greater investment and continued efforts, including international cooperation, are needed to accelerate progress in social development in these countries.

C. Implementation of programmes related to social groups

47. As part of its programme of work, the Commission also reviewed the implementation of programmes related to social groups.

48. The Summit took note of the role of the family in contributing to social integration. Its Programme of Action indicated that helping families in fulfilment of their supporting, educating and nurturing roles required social and economic policies that are designed to meet the needs of families and their individual members. Greater attention needs to be given to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members, with special attention directed to the care of children. Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the promotion of equal partnership between women and men in the family and to the promotion of mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation within both the family and society.

49. Over the past 20 years, a variety of family-oriented policies has focused on achieving those goals. Among them, programmes and policies have aimed at promoting work-family balance and gender equality and at encouraging more equitable sharing of household responsibilities between men and women. Governments have increased the provision of parental leave, including paternity leave. Many have enacted legal provisions to ensure flexible working arrangements and to offer subsidies to family-friendly companies. Investments have also been made in early childhood education and the provision of child care for children below 3 years of age. Such policies have contributed to the creation of better work-family balance for women and men and have been credited with greater labour participation of women and higher fertility rates in recent years across countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

50. Globally, the number of persons aged 60 or above is expected to more than triple by 2100, increasing from 784 million in 2011 to 2 billion in 2050 and 2.8 billion in 2100. Already, 65 per cent of the world's older persons live in the less developed regions, and by 2050, the rate will increase to 79 per cent. Older women outnumber older men and often face multiple forms of discrimination, including neglect, abuse, gender-based violence, lack of access to basic services and prevention of ownership

of assets. Despite the particular challenges facing older women, as well as the fact that they tend to live longer than men and are more likely to live alone, the feminization of ageing is almost entirely absent from the debate of the international community. This was recognized by the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-third session, at which a call was made for increased focus on older women in the context of the Commission o on the Status of Women.

51. The upcoming start of the third review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, was set in motion following the endorsement of the timeline and modalities for carrying out the review by the fifty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, in which it was decided that the global review would be held in 2018 at the fifty-fifth session. In order to advance the social inclusion and participation of older persons, the focus of the third cycle will be on the bottom-up approach, rather than on an agreed particular theme for the review and appraisal process. The modalities resolution also noted the appointment by the Human Rights Council of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, whose mandate includes the assessment of the human rights implications of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

52. The need to involve youth in the monitoring and accountability framework of the post-2015 agenda, and the institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms in the agenda were stressed by the Commission for Social Development during its fifty-third session. Youth are not the object of youth policies, but are part of the solution. Youth are particularly affected by lack of access to opportunities and resources, and unemployment and underemployment.

53. The development of youth has been especially threatened by anti-crisis measures. The development of skills, the quality of education, especially for girls and young women, and technical and vocational training for a successful transition into the labour market are of paramount importance. There is a need to empower youth, involve young people in political decisions, develop civic engagement and improve strategies and structures to strengthen the participation of youth in a successful and sustainable way. In this regard, it is important to empower youth to assume political leadership.

54. In the area of disability, efforts and progress have been made to further strengthen the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities into global development frameworks, following the high-level meeting on disability and development of the General Assembly in 2013. The outcome of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, that took place from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, reflects the importance of mainstreaming the participation of persons with disabilities into all stages of disaster risk reduction and responses, and their roles as resources and agents of change in disaster risk reduction and resilience building of communities. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) underscored that significant efforts are needed to ensure that disability-related data collection and needs assessments take place at every stage of policy and programme development and implementation. Lessons and successful experiences in operationalizing disability-inclusive disaster risk-reduction strategies can also be drawn on to assist the development and implementation of other post-2015 international development agenda.

55. In this regard, explicit and implicit references to disability in recently proposed sustainable development goals are promising. However, concerted efforts are required to ensure that they will be retained in the outcome document of the post-2015 development agenda and further translated in its implementation by making sure that any review and follow-up is carried out in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other relevant international commitments on disability and development. The rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities must be incorporated into the global development agenda. To achieve this: (a) the rights of persons with disabilities need to be mainstreamed into all development policy and programming; and (b) efforts must be made to identify the challenges faced by persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of economic, social and development programmes and to find solutions to overcome those challenges. In addition a strong international mechanism for systematic review and measurement of progress made and obstacles faced in the implementation of a disability-inclusive post-2015 development agenda should also be prioritized.

56. Indigenous peoples are another social group who face particular challenges in their struggle for social and economic progress. It is estimated that there are approximately 370 million indigenous peoples in the world living in some 90 countries. They continue to suffer disproportionately from high poverty rates and poor access to education and health care, and they are often politically marginalized. Indigenous peoples' territories are often isolated from other regions, with poor infrastructure and limited services. Their territories are also frequently targeted for natural resource extraction and other development activities from which they receive limited benefits. Since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there is a growing understanding that increased efforts are needed to meaningfully implement the provisions of the Declaration. Subsequently, the General Assembly organized a high-level plenary meeting in 2014, known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, in order to share perspectives and best practices to pursue the objectives of the Declaration. The outcome document of the World Conference contains a series of commitments calling for multifaceted action by a range of actors, first and foremost Member States, but also the United Nations system, as well as indigenous peoples themselves.

57. In the outcome document, Member States committed to take appropriate measures at the national level, including legislative, policy and administrative, to promote awareness of the declaration among all sectors of society and to develop national action plans, strategies or other measures, where relevant, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, to achieve the ends of the declaration. The outcome document also contains recognitions and commitments by States on various issues that are not explicitly covered by the declaration, including disaggregation of statistical data on indigenous peoples, the empowerment of indigenous women and addressing violence against them, and the provision of support for the occupations, traditional substance activities, economies and food security of indigenous peoples.

58. The outcome document also requests that the Secretary-General develop a system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the declaration. This action plan is in the process of being developed in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues.

D. Contributions of social development to the transition from Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals

59. The emerging contour of the post-2015 unified, universal and transformative global development agenda indicates that it will be a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity. It will consolidate collective efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, combat inequalities, achieve social progress, and foster inclusive and sustained economic growth, while protecting the environment, in order to achieve sustainable development that will realize a life with dignity for all. This is an agenda of action for all segments of society, where people are not only beneficiaries but also active agents of transformation.

60. Since the Summit, the world has become increasingly globalized, digitalized, and inter-connected. It is facing complex and inter-related challenges across economic, social and environmental fields, including rising inequalities within and between countries, persistently high unemployment rates, particularly among youth, social tensions and conflicts, environmental degradation and the negative impact of climate change. Those challenges can no longer be effectively tackled by a traditional sector-based approach. A more holistic, coherent, and integrated policy framework is necessary to consolidate actions by all stakeholders.

61. The core objectives of social development and the principles of social justice and people-centred development defined at the Summit capture the values underlining sustainable development. Social policy strengthens human capacity and resilience that are necessary for economic and environmental sustainability. Fulfilling social development goals is therefore fundamental to achieving socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development. Further efforts should be made to effectively integrate social policy into broader policymaking processes. The key challenge is to identify, analyse and articulate key interlinkages between social and economic and social and environmental dimensions and formulate policies to leverage the synergies among the three dimensions.

1. Addressing interlinkages between social and economic dimensions

62. Traditionally, there has been a perceived conflict between economic and social objectives, as the mainstream view was that economic growth would lead to social progress and a strong focus on social objectives would slow down economic growth. However, recent experiences of some developing countries has demonstrated that innovative social policy improves the well-being of people without sacrificing productivity, thus reconciling economic and social dimensions. Comprehensive and well-designed social policies have proven to be effective in reducing poverty and inequality and in maximizing opportunities for all to participate in productive economic activities, by improving access to basic services and productive resources, enhancing skills and well-being, and mitigating risks from economic and environmental shocks. In this regard, conditional and unconditional cash transfer programmes are good examples.

63. The promotion of decent jobs and the expansion of social protection can also serve as key elements that could reconcile social, economic and environmental objectives. Decent work opportunities and universal basic social protection ensure basic income levels for all, while at the same time enhancing labour market

participation, and effectively addressing a major challenge of "low productivity traps".

64. Investing in decent work and social protection has proven to be critical not only for the sustained reduction of poverty and the promotion of economic growth, but also for the promotion of social inclusion, dignity, self-definition, motivation and engagement of people. It also contributes to social and political stability that creates a favourable environment for economic growth and environmental protection, through social dialogue and participatory mechanisms for policy design and implementation (such as the new social contract in Tunisia). Core labour standards of the International Labour Organization must be implemented in all countries. Furthermore, the issue of the transformation of informal labour and undeclared work, or vulnerable jobs, into better structured, formal and declared employment needs further attention in the post-2015 development agenda. In addition, minimum wage is potentially one of the important tools to boost domestic demand while reducing poverty.

65 Well-designed social protection systems shield people from economic shocks, reduce risks and enhance resilience, especially among the most vulnerable and, as such, could serve as an effective policy tool for enabling the transition towards sustainable development. Some social transfer programmes (such as conditional or non-conditional cash transfer) are designed to address multiple dimensions of poverty and exclusion by providing guaranteed minimum income with improved access to education and health care, and possibly skills or job training. They thus also contribute to expanding domestic demand and enhancing human capability, a key to the achievement of inclusive and sustained growth. The Social Protection Floor initiative to tackle multiple dimensions of poverty, inequality and social exclusion is a key opportunity to promote sustainable development.[21] By establishing nationally defined and context-specific social protection floors to enhance access to social security and essential social services, countries make a tangible step towards poverty eradication and social integration.

2. Addressing the "missing" linkage between the environment and the social dimensions of sustainable development

66. The linkage between the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development remains less examined and needs to be further strengthened. This may involve a fundamental shift in the way we measure the progress of sustainable development. For example, one potential approach would be to assign social and economic values to certain natural assets. Currently, no costs are associated with the degradation of natural assets, although the degradation of water and air quality clearly leads to poor health (human or social costs) and higher costs for health-care systems (economic costs). Soil erosion, deforestation or reduction in fish stocks had disproportionately negative impacts on people living in poverty who depend on them (social and economic costs), while those who owned and controlled high-value natural assets, such as land, would accumulate wealth, further exacerbating poverty and inequality. Public policy, in particular social policy, would have a significant role in rectifying those imbalances, while also bear positive impact on the natural environment.

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[21] Further information available from www.socialprotectionfloor-gateway.org/ and www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_141818/lang-en/index.htm.

67. More recently, there has been an attempt to address some key linkages among poverty eradication, rural development, environmental protection, and job creation in emerging green sectors. As the most vulnerable and marginalized people in many countries often live in rural and agricultural areas, their livelihoods are intricately linked to the natural environment. Therefore, expanding their income generating opportunities into sectors associated with natural resources (for example, conservation of forests and coastal areas, water management, sustainable agriculture, among others) is the most effective way of reducing poverty, while at the same time protecting the environment. Poverty reduction policies and strategies should target activities and enhance peoples' capacity in such areas, including through more productive, safe and sustainable agriculture, land tenure policy, and enhancement of value added from productive activities.

68. At the same time, it is important to integrate social perspectives into environmental policies. Policies to prevent environmental degradation and preserve natural assets or natural capital need to incorporate the needs of people living in poverty and other vulnerable groups and communities, and support their access to decent jobs and/or enhance their capacity to assist them escaping from poverty and exclusion.

3. Strengthening institutional capacities

69. Institutional capacities, at the national, regional and global levels, to implement and monitor sustainable development goals and ensure accountability need to be strengthened. In particular, national capacity in collecting and analysing statistical data, especially disaggregated data (by gender, age, ethnicity, region), is critical for enabling evidence-based policymaking that integrates all three dimensions. Such data helps reorient policies and resources to the most vulnerable regions, areas, communities or social groups.

70. There is a need to view all human rights both as a means and an end to achieve sustainable development. Their standards and principles, in both process and substance, should be valued to attain the sustainable development goals. Integrating human rights principles such as non-discrimination, equality, respect for human dignity and cultural diversity into the post-2015 follow-up mechanisms would help enable people-centred sustainable development and address the structural causes of poverty, inequality, social injustice and environmental degradation as well as ensure accountability. Human rights instruments (such as treaty mechanisms) and a multi-layered framework of accountability could be effective tools to follow up the sustainable development goals, which may be extended to the private sector, for example through the use of human rights impact assessments or due diligence. In this regard, the Commission for Social Development could play an important role by utilizing and strengthening existing mechanisms within its mandate.

III. Conclusions

71. The vision, principles and goals adopted at the World Summit for Social Development continue to be relevant today. While enormous progress has been made since the Summit, progress in advancing social development goals remains uneven. Widening inequalities, high incidence of unemployment, underemployment and vulnerable work and lack of social protection hinder progress towards poverty eradication and other social development goals.

Role of the Commission for Social Development

72. Social development and social policy are fundamental to realizing the people-centred inclusive and sustainable development envisioned in the emerging post-2105 global development agenda. There is an urgent need to identify ways and means to leverage the linkages and synergies among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In this regard, the Commission for Social Development has a very important role to play, given the call for an integrated policy approach in the emerging post-2015 sustainable development agenda and its experience in the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission, in its 2015-16 cycle, is engaged in a review of what has and what has not worked towards sustaining social development, and consideration of forward-looking strategies to address emerging challenges, such as widening inequality, climate change, economic crises, environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, spread of diseases and external threats, including cross-border terrorism. This work can directly contribute to the effort to strengthen implementation of the post-2015 development agenda once it is adopted by the General Assembly at its seventieth session. Also, the Commission could strengthen global partnerships and international cooperation for strengthening social development to achieve the sustainable development goals.

IV. Recommendations

73. In order to accelerate progress towards the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and other social development goals within the post-2015 development framework, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) **Member States should renew their commitments to further advance social development by intensifying their efforts to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, within the context of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda;**

(b) **Governments should effectively address the interlinkages among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, including identifying and managing potential conflicts and creating synergies among them. In this context, institutions and capacity should be strengthened in order to foster policy integration at all levels; the promotion of decent work and social protection could serve as effective tools to reconcile social, economic, and environmental objectives;**

(c) **While a universal approach is effective in addressing poverty, inequality and exclusion, the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups and individuals should also be fully reflected in the implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. In this regard, the capacity of Governments in collecting and analysing disaggregated data should be strengthened;**

(d) **The role of the Commission for Social Development should be strengthened as a potential venue for following up the social dimensions of the sustainable development goals.**